



Using the Proper Standard

Brownsburg Church of Christ

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AM Assembly



Introduction:

As we have studied our Bibles, we have learned some profound principles. We were recently reminded that faith is the gateway to God's grace. We want God's grace. We know it is the gateway, not because it is some magical, mystical, ethereal charm that unlocks the grace of God, but because it is the recognition that God's way works, the surrender to walk that way, and the endurance to continue in the face of opposition. We do not walk His way because we are trying to prove how good we are. We walk His way because we know how bad we are by ourselves, and we know only His way will get us where we want to be. But this leaves us with a question. How do we know God's way? The modern ecumenical, evangelical world tells us that every way leads to the same place. Go to the church of your choice, we are told. And while that sounds nice and societally correct. Even the Cheshire Cat in "Alice in Wonderland" knew that if you walk different paths, you'll end up in different places. So, how can we know God's way? Where is the map? What is the standard? It seems reasonable to me that if we are looking for God's way, the place we need to start is with God.

Discussion:

I. God is our standard.

A. When God provided the Law for the Israelite people, His most repeated reason for why the people ought to obey Him was, "I am the Lord your God" (**Leviticus 18:1; et al**, ESV). His overriding standard was, "You shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy" (**Leviticus 19:1; et al**, ESV). In the New Covenant, Peter repeats this in **I Peter 1:15-16**. God is the standard for every aspect of our lives, whether personally or congregationally. Note three reasons why God is the standard.

1. *He is the creator of all things.* **Genesis 1:1** begins with the most powerful statement of God's right to be our standard. "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth" (ESV). **Hebrews 3:4** taught that God built all things. He is master over this "house," the universe. He is also master over His house, the church (**I Timothy 3:15**).

2. *He is the giver of all things.* **James 1:17** said that every good and perfect gift comes from God. In **Ecclesiastes 12:7**, the Preacher claimed that when we die our spirit will go back to God. Why? Because He gave it to us. When it has left our bodies we go back to Him—He is our judge. Regarding the church, He gave the sacrifice which has bought us and put us into His church (**John 3:16; I Peter 1:18-19**).

3. *He is the owner of all things.* Why do you think Jesus used stewards as examples (e.g. **Matthew 25:14-30; Luke 12:42-48**)? God has given us charge over all these gifts of His. But He is still the owner. Even in **Ecclesiastes 12:7**, the Preacher demonstrated this point when he said that our spirit goes back to God who gave it. It has been completely under our control. But our spirit is still God's and in the end we must give account to Him for how we have used His gifts. Regarding the church, remember whose house it is—His (**I Timothy 3:15**).

B. God is the standard. He put all we see together. He knows how it works. Doesn't it make sense to go back to the Designer and Creator to find out how to make it all work properly? We're not going to figure this out on our own; we need to know what God thinks (**Isaiah 55:8-9**). This is why James told us we should be quick to hear, slow to speak, and slow to anger (**James 1:19-25**). God is the standard. His way works, and when we speak against it or get angry about it, we will not be righteous—no matter what our society says.

II. How has God communicated His will to us?

A. God is our standard. But where does that leave us? We cannot see God. We do not know how to get to God's visible presence. How are we supposed to know His standard, His way? Paul explains this in **I Corinthians 2:6-12**. Just as we cannot know one another's minds unless we tell each other, we cannot know God's mind unless He tells us. Paul explained that is exactly what He did.

B. In **Hebrews 1:1-4**, the Hebrew writer explained that God has revealed Himself to us through His Son, who is the express image of the Father. We can know the Father by knowing Jesus. **II Peter 1:3** explains that we have all things that pertain to life and godliness through knowing Jesus (**cf. II Peter 1:8**). Thus Jesus told His disciples, in **John 14:5-11**, that we can only get to the Father through Him and if we have seen Him we

have seen the Father. However, Jesus is no longer here, and we, unlike the apostles, have never actually seen Him. He was speaking about us in **John 20:29** when He spoke of those who believe even though they do not see. What do we do about that?

- C. Jesus explained God's plan about this in **John 16:7-11**. Jesus was going to leave and send the Holy Spirit in order to convict the world of sin, righteousness, and the judgment. He very specifically says the reason the Spirit would do this is because Jesus was going to the Father and would no longer be here to do this.
- D. Notice the work of the Holy Spirit. In **John 14:25-26**, the Spirit would teach the apostles all truth and remind them of all Jesus had said. And thus Jesus prayed in **John 17:20-21** about those of us who would believe through the apostles' word. Through the working of the Holy Spirit, He left the apostles behind as witnesses (**Acts 1:7-8**). That began in **Acts 2:1-3**.
- E. But the apostles are gone. Are we to wait for miraculous revelation from the Holy Spirit today? God never promised to grant the power of the Holy Spirit to all Christians as He did to the apostles. There has never been a time when all Christians learned by miraculous revelation. When Paul told the Corinthians how to live in **I Corinthians 4:6**, he did not tell them to wait for personal miraculous revelation. Rather, he told them not to think beyond what was written. In **I Corinthians 14:37**, he explained that those who were spiritual would recognize what he wrote is the command of God. In **Ephesians 3:3-5**, Paul said God revealed the truth miraculously to apostles and prophets. They wrote God's will down. Others read to understand. In fact, Paul commanded us to understand (**Ephesians 5:17**).
- F. How can we in the 21st century see the Father? How can we know Him and His standard? By knowing, believing, and following the testimony of the witnesses Jesus left behind endowed with power of the Holy Spirit. Paul described it succinctly to Timothy in **I Timothy 3:16-17**. The Scriptures provide us with all we need to know God, our standard.

III. Do not fall prey to false standards.

- A. *False Standard #1: Personal Feelings*—Whether you wish to refer to this as conscience, preconceived notions, or simply emotions, our personal feelings are not the proper standard. **Proverbs 14:12** said that the way that seems right to man ends in death. Do not assume your personal feelings are the moving of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit revealed the Word, not your emotions.
- B. *False Standard #2: Personal Experiences*—**Matthew 7:21-23** described people with strong experiences. They would not even allow Jesus to argue with their experiences. But Jesus told them to depart because He had *never* known them. These were not once faithful children who had performed great works but had fallen. The problem was they based their notions on their experiences instead of God's standard.
- C. *False Standard #3: Parents*—We are to obey and honor our parents. However, God does not want us to follow our parents to hell. Too many people blindly follow their parents' faith without ever testing it with the proper standard of God's Word. Your parents may well be or have been on the straight and narrow path of life. But you can only know that by going to the proper standard. Peter explained that if what we are following is simply a family tradition, it is not the proper standard, it is aimless conduct (**I Peter 1:18-19, 22-25**).
- D. *False Standard #4: Public opinion*—The crowd is so easy to follow. If everyone is doing it, it must be right. But, Jesus explained that we will be walking on a pretty deserted road. The majority will take the broad easy path, while we must take the narrow and difficult path (**Matthew 7:13-14**). We can't just stick our finger up to test the doctrinal winds and decide which path to follow. God's Word matters, not public opinion.
- E. *False Standard #5: Preachers, pastors, and priests*—As good as some of the men who hold these positions are, men are men, and all are fallible. They are not our proper standard. Consider Simon the Sorcerer who seemed to demonstrate the "power of God that is called Great" (**Acts 8:9-11, ESV**). But he was a trickster who also needed the truth of God. Consider Apollos who was an eloquent speaker, mighty in the Word, knew the way of the Lord, but knew only the baptism of John (**Acts 18:24-26**). Consider the men who came from Judea teaching Gentiles to be circumcised in order to be saved (**Acts 15:1**). These men came from Jerusalem, the oldest and most established church in the world (*cf.* **Acts 15:24**), yet they taught error. Men can be wrong. The issue is not about whether they are honest or dishonest, sincere or insincere. The issue is whether or not they teach God's Word accurately. God's Word is the standard, not religious leaders.

Conclusion:

Our modern society cries out against having a standard. But God said, "Be holy as I am holy." God is our standard. We can know God's mind and will for He has told us through His Son, and we have seen and can read His Son's message through the Word He left for us through His Spirit and His witnesses. The Bible is our proper standard. The Bible shows us God's way. Are you walking that way?